

What is Culturally Relevant Pedagogy?

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The past several days were difficult ones for all of us to take in. Every time I turned on the T.V., radio, phone; I got an image, a video, a story, a comment about the racially charged protests and riots in the States. If this is difficult for me, I can only imagine how this is affecting our students.

In a portfolio such as ELL, I cannot ignore that the work is grounded in cultural and linguistic diversity. If our mandate is inclusion and equity, then the cultural pedagogy has to include anti-racism education. But what does this mean? What does this look like? What does it sound like? It is hard to know even where to start. But whenever the world feels too big, I always start with me. This article is a reflection of the "inside" so that we can collectively make the necessary ripples of change the "outside".

So...again, what does anti-racism education look like/sound like/feel like? How does our individual practice promote equity for students of different cultural backgrounds, languages, histories and skin colour? These questions may seem so daunting. And let's admit it, they are...*very* daunting. But the time to dismiss them for the sake of status quo or comfort is passed. The act of teaching is not neutral, no matter how much we try to make learning fun, friendly and comfortable. We educators, are affecting the way students think about themselves and the way they see the world.

The good news is it's 2020, we are not alone and we can take our work towards anti-racism one step at a time.



Idea # 1

Action based on critical self-reflection

The first and most important work of teaching is our ability to self-reflect. I have never found it helpful to call anyone 'good' or 'bad', 'inclusive' or 'racist' etc. Just like our students, we are multi-faceted and we find ourselves in many different contexts throughout a day, a week and a year.

Instead of passing judgment on others, reflect on the moments of our days and ask ourselves these questions in our practice:

- How does my plan of learning give voice to all my students, even my students who don't have English proficiency at this time?
- Before I choose a resource/anchor text/anchor lesson, how does this content enable me and my students to become more racially literate citizens?
- Where do I stand in my ability to lean into the uncomfortable spaces to talk about racial inclusion and racism?
- How can I make myself more ready to have these discussions with my students, colleagues, family and friends?
- What will I do to take care of myself after I have an uncomfortable encounter?

Idea #2

Use the First Peoples Principles of Learning to anchor your practice

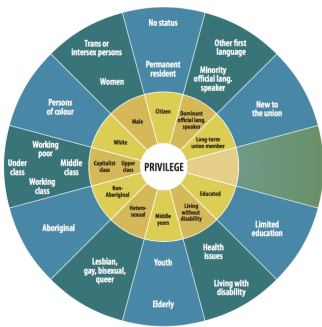
Anti-racism curriculum is already here and available to us in the form of the FPPL. The principles and practices are important for all students. However, I find the work even more urgent and important with our ELL students. There are opportunities for connection as many immigrants and refugee students too, have lost their home, their languages, and their familial relations. As students live the experience of negotiating their own identities, our First Peoples and the history of Canada can be a vehicle to ground them in their new context.

Though content is important, the FPPL also provides a way of doing and a way of being. I have found that by using the principles with fidelity, my lessons have transformed from “filling the empty vessel” to “creating the conditions for natural potential and growth”.

Following the principles can empower students and educators to deepen their understanding of belonging and decolonize the process of learning.

Resources

[BCTF Privilege Wheel](#)



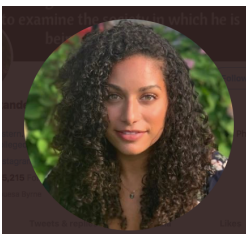
[Cultural Proficiency Scale](#)

The Essential Elements to Consider for Hiring and Creating				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess Culture: Identify the cultural groups present in the space Value Diversity: Create an appreciation for the differences among and between groups Manage the Dynamics of Difference: Develop the capacity to work with and across differences Adapt to Diversity: Change and adjust your policies and practices that support diversity and inclusion Intentionally Cultivate Knowledge: Grow the change into the system of the organization 				
CULTURAL PROFICIENCY CONTINUUM				
Change Mindset (to Values)		Change Open to Development		
DISTINCTION	INDIFFERENCE	BIASNESS	PRECONCERNANCE	CONFIDENCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discrete differences The distinction of one group's culture and behavior from another's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discrete differences Seeing all of the cultural differences as one Dismissing or overlooking differences Dismissing or overlooking differences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discrete differences Dismissing or overlooking differences Dismissing or overlooking differences Dismissing or overlooking differences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discrete differences Dismissing or overlooking differences Dismissing or overlooking differences Dismissing or overlooking differences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discrete differences Dismissing or overlooking differences Dismissing or overlooking differences Dismissing or overlooking differences
Factors Behaviors, Shaped by the BARRIERS		Factors Behaviors, Shaped by the PRINCIPLES		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unawareness of the need to adapt Resistance to change System of oppression and privilege A sense of entitlement 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culture is a continuous flow People are earned in varying degrees by the distance from There is a common world and common values They share the same humanity-defined needs They have shared learning and growth systems Prejudiced positions have to be a last resort Change is needed to address the primary systems The more through groups of cultural groups influence their positions on different values The absence of cultural competence creates a threat to organization success and performance 		

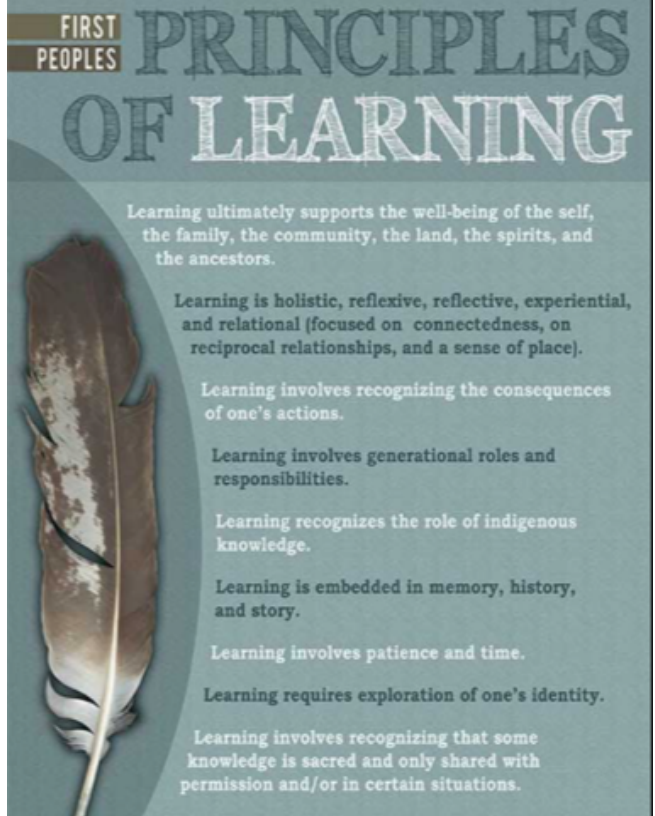
[Cultural Relevant Pedagogy Video](#)



[Victoria Alexander's Book List](#)



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Resource for FPPL

Idea #3:

Understand the role privilege plays in unconscious bias

Many of us, as professionals living and working in BC, have privilege (see the BCTF circle of Privilege). Regardless of how we are privileged, we need to be vigilant and seek to understand how those privileges affect our communication, our decisions and our relationships with others. If unchecked, privilege can be like a blind spot. Regardless of our good intentions and our conscious acts to combat racism, our blind spots will undermine and undo our good efforts. The way we process or react to uncomfortable events around racism is an indicator of our unconscious bias. But there is good news! There is an antidote to 'blind privilege' and that is empathy. When we actively seek to find other perspectives in a situation, and put ourselves in that perspective, it is like we are shoulder checking before we make a move. Many micro-aggressions and implied racist decisions can be prevented if we only "shoulder check".

When we find ourselves in a little or big moment, try asking the following questions:

- Can you tell me more about your experience/your thinking?
- If/when you're comfortable, can you share your story so I can understand?
- What do you think?
- Is there something I am missing?
- What is your perspective on this? Tell me more...